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E. George Lardner Jr.
Washington Post Staff Writer

The Central Intelligence Agency engaged in "widely unlawful" conduct over its 28-year history—from burglary to bugging to testing LSD on unsuspecting subjects, the Rockefeller commission report, issued yesterday, said.

The commission, however, defended the CIA's overall record and said that no fundamental changes were needed in the spy agency's basic legislative charter.

In addition to violation of federal criminal laws the commission said other activities—such as a top-secret project called Operation Chaos that involved spying on American dissident groups in response to White House pressures—were clearly improper.

"Some of these activities were initiated or ordered by Presidents, either directly or indirectly," the eight-member commission headed by Vice President Rockefeller said. The commission cited Lyndon B. Johnson and Richard M. Nixon.

In a 289-page report made public by the White House, the commission endorsed closer oversight of the CIA by both Congress and the executive branch, but coupled these recommendations with other proposals that would apparently strengthen the CIA's authority to conduct domestic operations.

At the same time, the report made clear that the agency has a long way to go to prevent a recurrence of the abuses that were found.

The CIA inspector general's office, which investigated many of the agency's misdeeds in 1973, has recently been cut back sharply and is currently unable to make regular reviews of the CIA's various departments, the commission disclosed.

The penchant for secrecy within the agency itself has also "sometimes been carried to extremes," preventing proper supervision and control, the report said.

In many cases, the commission said of a variety of illegal operations undertaken in the name of CIA security, "the state of the CIA records on these activities is such that it is often difficult to determine why the investigation occurred in the first place, who authorized the special coverage, and what the results were."

The report also disclosed that for more than 20 years, the Department of Justice simply washed its hands of alleged criminal conduct by CIA employees or agents and agreed to let the CIA itself decide whether a crime had

been committed and whether security considerations precluded prosecution even where a crime had taken place.

Harshly critical of the arrangement, the commission called it "an abdication by the Department of Justice of its statutory responsibilities."

"This state of affairs," the commission said, "continued until January of 1975"—the month following disclosure in The New York Times of some of the illegal and improper activities that had been uncovered by the CIA inspector general two years earlier. The sequence suggested strongly that the CIA had decided no prosecutions were warranted and would have been able to maintain that position but for the publicity.

The commission made 30 recommendations for change, ranging from more stringent internal controls and guidelines within the CIA on the one hand to adoption on the other hand of the CIA's long-sought version of an official secrets act.

This would "make it a criminal offense for employees or former employees of the CIA willfully to divulge to any unauthorized person classified information pertaining to foreign intelligence or the collection thereof obtained during the course of their employment."

The commission also suggested that President Ford issue an executive order that would give the CIA more explicit authority for operations in this country by allowing it to collect information on "persons suspected of espionage or other illegal activities relating to foreign intelligence, provided that proper coordination with the FBI is accomplished."

Under the National Security Act of 1947, which is the agency's basic charter, the CIA is prohibited from undertaking any "police, subpoena, law-enforcement powers or internal security functions."

The commission gave no reason for proposing a change by executive order rather than by law. The report did suggest other revisions in the National Security Act, including one that would authorize the CIA to provide "guidance and technical assistance to other agency and department heads in protecting against unauthorized disclosures within their own agencies and departments."

Omitted from the commission report as issued was a section on the controversial assassination issue. The evidence on assassinations will be turned over by the White House to the Justice Department and to Congress.

Attorney General Edward H. Levi will personally review the informa-

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• In response to White House requests in the face of growing domestic disorder, first from President Johnson and later from President Nixon, the CIA set up a Special Operations Group to collect and evaluate information on American dissidents.

The project, which came to be known as Operation Chaos, was ostensibly designed at the outset to determine the extent of foreign influence on domestic protests, but eventually resulted in direct spying on Americans and the accumulation of a computerized index of more than 300,000 persons and organizations.

Chaos, which had a staff of 52 CIA officers and close to 20 undercover agents, built up files on such groups as the American Indian Movement, Students for a Democratic Society, and Grove Press Inc. It was an isolated component of the CIA's counterintelligence section under James Angleton, who recently retired, but the commission said he was apparently kept in the dark about it on instructions from then-CIA Director Richard M. Helms.

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